THE FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

Robert Green Ingersoll

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The Works of Robert Green Ingersoll

In Twelve Volumes

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C. P. FARRELL

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THE WORKS

OF

Robert G. Ingersoll

"THE HANDS THAT HELP ARE BETTER FAR THAN LIPS THAT PRAY."

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LECTURES

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

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I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ONE of the foundation stones of our faith is the Old Testament. If that book is not true, if its authors were unaided men, if it contains blunders and falsehoods, then that stone crumbles to dust.

The geologists demonstrated that the author of Genesis was mistaken as to the age of the world, and that the story of the universe having been created in six days, about six thousand years ago could not be true.

The theologians then took the ground that the "days" spoken of in Genesis were periods of time, epochs, six "long whiles," and that the work of creation might have been commenced millions of years ago.

The change of days into epochs was considered by the believers of the Bible as a great triumph over the hosts of infidelity. The fact that Jehovah had ordered the Jews to keep the Sabbath, giving as a reason that he had made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, did not interfere with the acceptance of the "epoch" theory.

But there is still another question. How long has man been upon the earth?

According to the Bible, Adam was certainly the first man, and in his case the epoch theory cannot change the account. The Bible gives the age at which Adam died, and gives the generations to the flood—then to Abraham and so on, and shows that from the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ it was about four thousand and four years.

According to the sacred Scriptures man has been on this earth five thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine years *and* no more.

Is this true?

Geologists have divided a few years of the world's history into periods, reaching from the azoic rocks to the soil of our time. With most of these periods they associate certain forms of life, so that it is known that the lowest forms of life belonged with the earliest

periods, and the higher with the more recent. It is also known that certain forms of life existed in Europe many ages ago, and that many thousands of years ago these forms disappeared.

For instance, it is well established that at one time there lived in Europe, and in the British Islands some of the most gigantic mammals, the mammoth, the woolly-haired rhinoceros, the Irish elk, elephants and other forms that have in those countries become extinct. Geologists say that many thousands of years have passed since these animals ceased to inhabit those countries.

It was during the Drift Period that these forms of life existed in Europe and England, and that must have been hundreds of thousands of years ago.

In caves, once inhabited by men, have been found implements of flint and the bones of these extinct animals. With the flint tools man had split the bones of these beasts that he might secure the marrow for food.

Many such caves and hundreds of such tools, and of such bones have been found. And we now know that in the Drift Period man was the companion of these extinct monsters.

It is therefore certain that many, many thousands of years before Adam lived, men, women and children inhabited the earth.

It is certain that the account in the Bible of the creation of the first man is a mistake. It is certain that the inspired writers knew nothing about the origin of man.

Let me give you another fact :

The Egyptians were astronomers. A few years ago representations of the stars were found on the walls of an old temple, and it was discovered by calculating backward that the stars did occupy the exact positions as represented about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ. Afterward another representation of the stars was found, and by calculating in the same way, it was found that the stars did occupy the exact positions represented about three thousand eight hundred years before Christ.

According to the Bible the first man was created four thousand and four years before Christ. If this is true then Egypt was founded, its language formed, its arts cultivated, its astronomical discoveries made and recorded about two hundred years after the creation of the first man.

In other words, Adam was two or three hundred years old when the Egyptian astronomers made these representations.

Nothing can be more absurd.

Again I say that the writers of the Bible were mistaken.

How do I know?

According to that same Bible there was a flood some fifteen or sixteen hundred years after Adam was created that destroyed the entire human race with the exception of eight persons, and according to the Bible the Egyptians descended from one of the sons of Noah. How then did the Egyptians represent the stars in the position they occupied twelve hundred years before the flood?

No one pretends that Egypt existed as a nation before the flood. Yet the astronomical representations found, must have been made more than a thousand years before the world was drowned.

There is another mistake in the Bible.

According to that book the sun was made after the earth was created.

Is this true?

Did the earth exist before the sun?

The men of science are believers in the exact opposite. They believe that the earth is a child of the sun — that the earth, as well as the other planets belonging to our constellation, came from the sun.

The writers of the Bible were mistaken.

There is another point:

According to the Bible, Jehovah made the world in six days, and the work done each day is described. What did Jehovah do on the second day?

This is the record:

"And God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so, and God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

The writer of this believed in a solid firmament—the floor of Jehovah's house. He believed that the waters had been divided, and that the rain came from above the firmament. He did not understand the fact of evaporation—did not know that the rain came from the water on the earth.

Now we know that there is no firmament, and

we know that the waters are not divided by a firmament. Consequently we know that, according to the Bible, Jehovah did nothing on the second day. He must have rested on Tuesday. This being so, we ought to have two Sundays a week.

Can we rely on the historical parts of the Bible?

Seventy souls went down into Egypt, and in two hundred and fifteen years increased to three millions. They could not have doubled more than four times a century. Say nine times in two hundred and fifteen years.

This makes thirty-five thousand eight hundred and forty, (35,840,) instead of three millions.

Can we believe the accounts of the battles?

Take one instance:

Jereboam had an army of eight hundred thousand men, Abijah of four hundred thousand. They fought. The Lord was on Abijah's side, and he killed five hundred thousand of Jereboam's men.

All these soldiers were Jews—all lived in Palestine, a poor miserable little country about one-quarter as large as the State of New York. Yet one million two hundred thousand soldiers were put in the field. This required a population in the country of ten or twelve millions. Of course this is absurd. Palestine

in its palmiest days could not have supported two millions of people.

The soil is poor.

If the Bible is inspired, is it true?

We are told by this inspired book of the gold and silver collected by King David for the temple—the temple afterward completed by the virtuous Solomon.

According to the blessed Bible, David collected about two thousand million dollars in silver, and five thousand million dollars in gold, making a total of seven thousand million dollars.

Is this true?

There is in the bank of France at the present time (1895) nearly six hundred million dollars, and so far as we know, it is the greatest amount that was ever gathered together. All the gold now known, coined and in bullion, does not amount to much more than the sum collected by David.

Seven thousand millions. Where did David get this gold? The Jews had no commerce. They owned no ships. They had no great factories, they produced nothing for other countries. There were no gold or silver mines in Palestine. Where then was this gold, this silver found? I will tell you: In

the imagination of a writer who had more patriotism than intelligence, and who wrote, not for the sake of truth, but for the glory of the Jews.

Is it possible that David collected nearly eight thousand tons of gold—that he by economy got together about sixty thousand tons of silver, making a total of gold and silver of sixty-eight thousand tons?

The average freight car carries about fifteen tons—David's gold and silver would load about four thousand five hundred and thirty-three cars, making a train about thirty-two miles in length. And all this for the temple at Jerusalem, a building ninety feet long and forty-five feet high and thirty wide, to which was attached a porch thirty feet wide, ninety feet long and one hundred and eighty feet high.

Probably the architect was inspired.

Is there a sensible man in the world who believes that David collected seven thousand million dollars worth of gold or silver?

There is hardly five thousand million dollars of gold now used as money in the whole world. Think of the millions taken from the mines of California, Australia and Africa during the present century and yet the total scarcely exceeds the amount collected by King David more than a thousand years before

the birth of Christ. Evidently the inspired historian made a mistake.

It required a little imagination and a few ciphers to change seven million dollars or seven hundred thousand dollars into seven thousand million dollars. Drop four ciphers and the story becomes fairly reasonable.

The Old Testament must be thrown aside. It is no longer a foundation. It has crumbled.

II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BUT we have the New Testament, the sequel of the Old, in which Christians find the fulfillment of prophecies made by inspired Jews.

The New Testament vouches for the truth, the inspiration, of the Old, and if the old is false, the New cannot be true.

In the New Testament we find all that we know about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

It is claimed that the writers were divinely inspired, and that all they wrote is true.

Let us see if these writers agree.

Certainly there should be no difference about the birth of Christ. From the Christian's point of view, nothing could have been of greater importance than that event.

Matthew says: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

"Saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him."

Matthew does not tell us who these wise men were, from what country they came, to what race they belonged. He did not even know their names.

We are also informed that when Herod heard these things he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him; that he gathered the chief priests and asked of them where Christ should be born and they told him that he was to be born in Bethlehem.

Then Herod called the wise men and asked them when the star appeared, and told them to go to Bethlehem and report to him.

When they left Herod, the star again appeared and went before them until it stood over the place where the child was.

When they came to the child they worshiped him,—gave him gifts, and being warned by God in a dream, they went back to their own country without calling on Herod.

Then the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary and the child into Egypt for fear of Herod.

So Joseph took Mary and the child to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

Then Herod, finding that he was mocked by the wise men, "sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof from two years old and under."

After the death of Herod an angel again appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him to take mother and child and go back to Palestine.

So he went back and dwelt in Nazareth.

Is this story true? Must we believe in the star and the wise men? Who were these wise men? From what country did they come? What interest had they in the birth of the King of the Jews? What became of them and their star?

Of course I know that the Holy Catholic Church has in her keeping the three skulls that belonged to these wise men, but I do not know where the church obtained these relics, nor exactly how their genuineness has been established.

Must we believe that Herod murdered the babes of Bethlehem?

Is it not wonderful that the enemies of Herod did not charge him with this horror? Is it not marvel-

ous that Mark and Luke and John forgot to mention this most heartless of massacres?

Luke also gives an account of the birth of Christ. He says that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed; that this was when Cyrenius was governor of Syria; that in accordance with this decree, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be taxed; that at that place Christ was born and laid in a manger. He also says that shepherds, in the neighborhood, were told of the birth by an angel, with whom was a multitude of the heavenly host; that these shepherds visited Mary and the child, and told others what they had seen and heard.

He tells us that after eight days the child was named, Jesus; that forty days after his birth he was taken by Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem, and that after they had performed all things according to the law they returned to Nazareth. Luke also says that the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and that his parents went every year to Jerusalem.

Do the accounts in Matthew and Luke agree? Can both accounts be true?

Luke never heard of the star, and Matthew knew nothing of the heavenly host. Luke never heard of

the wise men, nor Matthew of the shepherds. Luke knew nothing of the hatred of Herod, the murder of the babes or the flight into Egypt. According to Matthew, Joseph, warned by an angel, took Mary and the child and fled into Egypt. According to Luke they all went to Jerusalem, and from there back to Nazareth.

Both of these accounts cannot be true. Will some Christian scholar tell us which to believe?

When was Christ born?

Luke says that it took place when Cyrenius was governor. Here is another mistake. Cyrenius was not appointed governor until after the death of Herod, and the taxing could not have taken place until ten years after the alleged birth of Christ.

According to Luke, Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, and for the purpose of getting them to Bethlehem, so that the child could be born in the right place, the taxing under Cyrenius was used, but the writer, being "inspired" made a mistake of about ten years as to the time of the taxing and of the birth.

Matthew says nothing about the date of the birth, except that he was born when Herod was king. It is now known that Herod had been dead ten years

before the taxing under Cyrenius. So, if Luke tells the truth, Joseph, being warned by an angel, fled from the hatred of Herod ten years after Herod was dead. If Matthew and Luke are both right Christ was taken to Egypt ten years before he was born, and Herod killed the babes ten years after he was dead.

Will some Christian scholar have the goodness to harmonize these "inspired" accounts?

There is another thing.

Matthew and Luke both try to show that Christ was of the blood of David, that he was a descendant of that virtuous king.

As both of these writers were inspired and as both received their information from God, they ought to agree.

According to Matthew there was between David and Jesus twenty-seven generations, and he gives all the names.

According to Luke there were between David and Jesus forty-two generations, and he gives all the names.

In these genealogies—both inspired—there is a difference between David and Jesus, a difference of some fourteen or fifteen generations.

Besides, the names of all the ancestors are different, with two exceptions.

Matthew says that Joseph's father was Jacob. Luke says that Heli was Joseph's father.

Both of these genealogies cannot be true, and the probability is that both are false.

There is not in all the pulpits ingenuity enough to harmonize these ignorant and stupid contradictions.

There are many curious mistakes in the words attributed to Christ.

We are told in Matthew, chapter xxiii, verse 35, that Christ said:

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

It is certain that these words were not spoken by Christ. He could not by any possibility have known that the blood of Zacharias had been shed. As a matter of fact, Zacharias was killed by the Jews, during the seige of Jerusalem by Titus, and this seige took place seventy-one years after the birth of Christ, thirty-eight years after he was dead.

There is still another mistake.

Zacharias was not the son of Barachias—no such

Zacharias was killed. The Zacharias that was slain was the son of Baruch.

But we must not expect the "inspired" to be accurate.

Matthew says that at the time of the crucifixion—"the graves were opened and that many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves *after* his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

According to this the graves were opened at the time of the crucifixion, but the dead did not arise and come out until after the resurrection of Christ.

They were polite enough to sit in their open graves and wait for Christ to rise first.

To whom did these saints appear? What became of them? Did they slip back into their graves and commit suicide?

Is it not wonderful that Mark, Luke and John never heard of these saints?

What kind of saints were they? Certainly they were not Christian saints.

So, the inspired writers do not agree in regard to Judas.

Certainly the inspired writers ought to have known what happened to Judas, the betrayer. Matthew

being duly "inspired" says that when Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned, he repented and took back the money to the chief priests and elders, saying that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. They said to him: "What is that to us? See thou to that." Then Judas threw down the pieces of silver and went and hanged himself.

The chief priests then took the pieces of silver and bought the potter's field to bury strangers in, and it is called the field of blood.

We are told in Acts of the apostles that Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and said: "Now this man, (Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity—and falling headlong he burst asunder and all his bowels gushed out—that field is called the field of blood."

Matthew says Judas repented and gave back the money.

Peter says that he bought a field with the money.

Matthew says that Judas hanged himself. Peter says that he fell down and burst asunder. Which of these accounts is true?

Besides, it is hard to see why Christians hate, loathe and despise Judas. According to their scheme of salvation, it was absolutely necessary that Christ

should be killed — necessary that he should be betrayed, and had it not been for Judas, all the world, including Christ's mother, and the part of Christ that was human, would have gone to hell.

Yet, according to the New Testament, Christ did not know that one of his disciples was to betray him.

Jesus, when on his way to Jerusalem, for the last time, said, speaking to the twelve disciples, Judas being present, that they, the disciples should thereafter sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Yet, more than a year before this journey, John says that Christ said, speaking to the twelve disciples: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." And John adds: "He spake of Judas Iscariot, for it was he that should betray him."

Why did Christ a year afterward, tell Judas that he should sit on a throne and judge one of the tribes of Israel?

There is still another trouble.

Paul says that Jesus after his resurrection appeared to the twelve disciples. According to Paul, Jesus appeared to Judas with the rest.

Certainly Paul had not heard the story of the betrayal.

Why did Christ select Judas as one of his disciples, knowing that he would betray him? Did he desire to be betrayed? Was it his intention to be put to death?

Why did he fail to defend himself before Pilate?

According to the accounts, Pilate wanted to save him. Did Christ wish to be convicted?

The Christians are compelled to say that Christ intended to be sacrificed—that he selected Judas with that end in view, and that he refused to defend himself because he desired to be crucified. All this is in accordance with the horrible idea that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

III.

JEHOVAH.

GOD the Father.

The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the God of the Christians.

He it was who created the Universe, who made all substance, all force, all life, from nothing. He it is who has governed and still governs the world. He has established and destroyed empires and kingdoms, despotisms and republics. He has enslaved and liberated the sons of men. He has caused the sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

This shows his goodness.

He has caused his volcanoes to devour the good and the bad, his cyclones to wreck and rend the generous and the cruel, his floods to drown the loving and the hateful, his lightning to kill the virtuous and the vicious, his famines to starve the innocent and criminal and his plagues to destroy the wise and good, the ignorant and wicked. He has allowed his

enemies to imprison, to torture and to kill his friends. He has permitted blasphemers to flay his worshipers alive, to dislocate their joints upon racks, and to burn them at the stake. He has allowed men to enslave their brothers and to sell babes from the breasts of mothers.

This shows his impartiality.

The pious negro who commenced his prayer: "O thou great and unscrupulous God," was nearer right than he knew.

Ministers ask: Is it possible for God to forgive man?

And when I think of what has been suffered—of the centuries of agony and tears, I ask: Is it possible for man to forgive God?

How do Christians prove the existence of their God? Is it possible to think of an infinite being? Does the word God correspond with any image in the mind? Does the word God stand for what we know or for what we do not know?

Is not this unthinkable God a guess, an inference?

Can we think of a being without form, without body, without parts, without passions? Why should we speak of a being without body as of the masculine gender?

Why should the Bible speak of this God as a man? —of his walking in the garden in the cool of the evening—of his talking, hearing and smelling? If he has no passions why is he spoken of as jealous, revengeful, angry, pleased and loving?

In the Bible God is spoken of as a person in the form of man, journeying from place to place, as having a home and occupying a throne. These ideas have been abandoned, and now the Christian's God is the infinite, the incomprehensible, the formless, bodiless and passionless.

Of the existence of such a being there can be, in the nature of things, no evidence.

Confronted with the universe, with fields of space sown thick with stars, with all there is of life, the wise man, being asked the origin and destiny of all, replies: "I do not know. These questions are beyond the powers of my mind." The wise man is thoughtful and modest. He clings to facts. Beyond his intellectual horizon he does not pretend to see. He does not mistake hope for evidence or desire for demonstration. He is honest. He neither deceives himself nor others.

The theologian arrives at the unthinkable, the inconceivable, and he calls this God. The scientist

arrives at the unthinkable, the inconceivable, and calls it the Unknown.

The theologian insists that his inconceivable governs the world, that it, or he, or they, can be influenced by prayers and ceremonies, that it, or he, or they, punishes and rewards, that it, or he, or they, has priests and temples.

The scientist insist that the Unknown is not changed so far as he knows by prayers of people or priests. He admits that he does not know whether the Unknown is good or bad — whether he, or it, wants or whether he, or it, is worthy of worship. He does not say that the Unknown is God, that it created substance and force, life and thought. He simply says that of the Unknown he knows nothing.

Why should Christians insist that a God of infinite wisdom, goodness and power governs the world?

Why did he allow millions of his children to be enslaved? Why did he allow millions of mothers to be robbed of their babes? Why has he allowed injustice to triumph? Why has he permitted the innocent to be imprisoned and the good to be burned? Why has he withheld his rain and starved millions of the children of men? Why has he allowed the volcanoes to destroy, the earthquakes to devour, and the tempest to wreck and rend?

IV.

THE TRINITY.

THE New Testament informs us that Christ was the son of Joseph and the son of God, and that Mary was his mother.

How is it established that Christ was the son of God?

It is said that Joseph was told so in a dream by an angel.

But Joseph wrote nothing on that subject—said nothing so far as we know. Mary wrote nothing, said nothing. The angel that appeared to Joseph or that informed Joseph said nothing to anybody else. Neither has the Holy Ghost, the supposed father, ever said or written one word. We have received no information from the parties who could have known anything on the subject. We get all our facts from those who could not have known.

How is it possible to prove that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ?

Who knows that such a being as the Holy Ghost ever existed?

How was it possible for Mary to know anything about the Holy Ghost?

How could Joseph know that he had been visited by an angel in a dream?

Could he know that the visitor was an angel?. It all occurred in a dream and poor Joseph was asleep. What is the testimony of one who was asleep worth?

All the evidence we have is that somebody who wrote part of the New Testament says that the Holy Ghost was the father of Christ, and that somebody who wrote another part of the New Testament says that Joseph was the father of Christ.

Matthew and Luke give the genealogy and both show that Christ was the son of Joseph.

The "Incarnation" has to be believed without evidence. There is no way in which it can be established. It is beyond the reach and realm of reason. It defies observation and is independent of experience.

It is claimed not only that Christ was the Son of God, but that he was, and is, God.

Was he God before he was born? Was the body of Mary the dwelling place of God?

What evidence have we that Christ was God?

Somebody has said that Christ claimed that God was his father and that he and his father were one. We do not know who this somebody was and do not know from whom he received his information.

Somebody who was "inspired" has said that Christ was of the blood of David through his father Joseph.

This is all the evidence we have.

Can we believe that God, the creator of the Universe, learned the trade of a carpenter in Palestine, that he gathered a few disciples about him, and after teaching for about three years, suffered himself to be crucified by a few ignorant and pious Jews?

Christ, according to the faith, is the second person in the Trinity, the Father being the first and the Holy Ghost the third. Each of these three persons is God. Christ is his own father and his own son. The Holy Ghost is neither father nor son, but both. The son was begotten by the father, but existed before he was begotten—just the same before as after. Christ is just as old as his father, and the father is just as young as his son. The Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and Son, but was equal to the Father and Son before he proceeded, that is

to say, before he existed, but he is of the same age of the other two.

So, it is declared that the Father is God, and the Son God and the Holy Ghost God, and that these three Gods make one God.

According to the celestial multiplication table, once one is three, and three times one is one, and according to heavenly subtraction if we take two from three, three are left. The addition is equally peculiar, if we add two to one we have but one. Each one is equal to himself and the other two. Nothing ever was, nothing ever can be mòre perfectly idiotic and absurd than the dogma of the Trinity.

How is it possible to prove the existence of the Trinity?

Is it possible for a human being, who has been born but once, to comprehend, or to imagine the existence of three beings, each of whom is equal to the three?

Think of one of these beings as the father of one, and think of that one as half human and all God, and think of the third as having proceeded from the other two, and then think of all three as one. Think that after the father begot the son, the father was

still alone, and after the Holy Ghost proceeded from the father and the son, the father was still alone—because there never was and never will be but one God.

At this point, absurdity having reached its limit, nothing more can be said except: "Let us pray."

V.

THE THEOLOGICAL CHRIST.

IN the New Testament we find the teachings and sayings of Christ. If we say that the book is inspired, then we must admit that Christ really said all the things attributed to him by the various writers. If the book is inspired we must accept it all. We have no right to reject the contradictory and absurd and accept the reasonable and good. We must take it all just as it is.

My own observation has led me to believe that men are generally consistent in their theories and inconsistent in their lives.

So, I think that Christ in his utterances was true to his theory, to his philosophy.

If I find in the Testament sayings of a contradictory character, I conclude that some of those sayings were never uttered by him. The sayings that are, in my judgment, in accordance with what I believe

to have been his philosophy, I accept, and the others I throw away.

There are some of his sayings which show him to have been a devout Jew, others that he wished to destroy Judaism, others showing that he held all people except the Jews in contempt and that he wished to save no others, others showing that he wished to convert the world, still others showing that he was forgiving, self-denying and loving, others that he was revengeful and malicious, others, that he was an ascetic, holding all human ties in utter contempt.

The following passages show that Christ was a devout Jew.

"Swear not, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth for it is his footstool, neither by Jerusalem for it is his holy city."

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

"For after all these things, (clothing, food and drink) do the Gentiles seek."

So, when he cured a leper, he said: "Go thy way, show thyself unto the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded."

Jesus sent his disciples forth saying: "Go not into

the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

A woman came out of Canaan and cried to Jesus: "Have mercy on me, my daughter is sorely vexed with a devil"—but he would not answer. Then the disciples asked him to send her away, and he said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Then the woman worshiped him and said: "Lord help me." But he answered and said: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." Yet for her faith he cured her child.

So, when the young man asked him what he must do to be saved, he said: "Keep the commandments."

Christ said: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

Christ went into the temple and cast out them that sold and bought there, and said: "It is written, my house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves."

"We know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews."

Certainly all these passages were written by persons who regarded Christ as the Messiah.

Many of the sayings attributed to Christ show that he was an ascetic, that he cared nothing for kindred, nothing for father and mother, nothing for brothers or sisters, and nothing for the pleasures of life.

Christ said to a man: "Follow me." The man said: "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Christ answered: "Let the dead bury their dead." Another said: "I will follow thee, but first let me go bid them farewell which are at home."

Jesus said: "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. If thine right eye offend thee pluck it out. If thy right hand offend thee cut it off."

One said unto him: "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." And he answered: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" Then he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren."

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or

children, or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundred fold and shall inherit everlasting life."

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

Christ it seems had a philosophy.

He believed that God was a loving father, that he would take care of his children, that they need do nothing except to rely implicitly on God.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. * * * For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

"Ask and it shall be given you. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. If ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you. The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Christ seemed to rely absolutely on the protection of God until the darkness of death gathered about

him, and then he cried: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

While there are many passages in the New Testament showing Christ to have been forgiving and tender, there are many others showing that he was exactly the opposite.

What must have been the spirit of one who said: "I am come to send fire on the earth? Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

"If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

This passage built dungeons and lighted fagots.

"Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

"I came not to bring peace but a sword."

All these sayings could not have been uttered by the same person. They are inconsistent with each other. Love does not speak the words of hatred. The real philanthropist does not despise all nations but his own. The teacher of universal forgiveness cannot believe in eternal torture.

From the interpolations, legends, accretions, mistakes and falsehoods in the New Testament is it possible to free the actual man? Clad in mist and myth, hidden by the draperies of gods, deformed, indistinct as faces in clouds, is it possible to find and recognize the features, the natural face of the actual Christ?

For many centuries our fathers closed their eyes to the contradictions and inconsistencies of the Testament and in spite of their reason harmonized the interpolations and mistakes.

This is no longer possible. The contradictions are too many, too glaring. There are contradictions of fact not only, but of philosophy, of theory.

The accounts of the trial, the crucifixion, and ascen-

sion of Christ do not agree. They are full of mistakes and contradictions.

According to one account Christ ascended the day of, or the day after his resurrection. According to another he remained forty days after rising from the dead. According to one account, he was seen after his resurrection only by a few women and his disciples. According to another he was seen by the women, by his disciples on several occasions and by hundreds of others.

According to Matthew, Luke and Mark, Christ remained for the most part in the country, seldom going to Jerusalem. According to John he remained mostly in Jerusalem, going occasionally into the country, and then generally to avoid his enemies.

According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, Christ taught that if you would forgive others God would forgive you. According to John, Christ said that the only way to get to heaven was to believe on him and be born again.

These contradictions are gross and palpable and demonstrate that the New Testament is not inspired, and that many of its statements must be false.

If we wish to save the character of Christ, many of the passages must be thrown away.

We must discard the miracles or admit that he was insane or an impostor. We must discard the passages that breathe the spirit of hatred and revenge, or admit that he was malevolent.

If Matthew was mistaken about the genealogy of Christ, about the wise men, the star, the flight into Egypt and the massacre of the babes by Herod,—then he may have been mistaken in many passages that he put in the mouth of Christ.

The same may be said in regard to Mark, Luke and John.

The church must admit that the writers of the New Testament were uninspired men — that they made many mistakes, that they accepted impossible legends as historical facts, that they were ignorant and superstitious, that they put malevolent, stupid, insane and unworthy words in the mouth of Christ, described him as the worker of impossible miracles and in many ways stained and belittled his character.

The best that can be said about Christ is that nearly nineteen centuries ago he was born in the land of Palestine in a country without wealth, without commerce, in the midst of a people who knew nothing of the greater world — a people enslaved,

crushed by the mighty power of Rome. That this babe, this child of poverty and want grew to manhood without education, knowing nothing of art, or science, and at about the age of thirty began wandering about the hills and hamlets of his native land, discussing with priests, talking with the poor and sorrowful, writing nothing, but leaving his words in the memory or forgetfulness of those to whom he spoke.

That he attacked the religion of his time because it was cruel. That this excited the hatred of those in power, and that Christ was arrested, tried and crucified.

For many centuries this great Peasant of Palestine has been worshiped as God.

Millions and millions have given their lives to his service. The wealth of the world was lavished on his shrines. His name carried consolation to the diseased and dying. His name dispelled the darkness of death, and filled the dungeon with light. His name gave courage to the martyr, and in the midst of fire, with shriveling lips the sufferer uttered it again and again. The outcasts, the deserted, the fallen, felt that Christ was their friend, felt that he knew their sorrows and pitied their sufferings.

The poor mother, holding her dead babe in her arms, lovingly whispered his name. His gospel has been carried by millions to all parts of the globe, and his story has been told by the self-denying and faithful to countless thousands of the sons of men. In his name have been preached charity, — forgiveness and love.

He it was, who according to the faith, brought immortality to light, and many millions have entered the valley of the shadow with their hands in his.

All this is true, and if it were all, how beautiful, how touching, how glorious it would be. But it is not all. There is another side.

In his name millions and millions of men and women have been imprisoned, tortured and killed. In his name millions and millions have been enslaved. In his name the thinkers, the investigators, have been branded as criminals, and his followers have shed the blood of the wisest and best. In his name the progress of many nations was stayed for a thousand years. In his gospel was found the dogma of eternal pain, and his words added an infinite horror to death. His gospel filled the world with hatred and revenge; made intellectual honesty a crime; made happiness here the road to hell, denounced love as

base and bestial, canonized credulity, crowned bigotry and destroyed the liberty of man.

It would have been far better had the New Testament never been written—far better had the theological Christ never lived. Had the writers of the Testament been regarded as uninspired, had Christ been thought of only as a man, had the good been accepted and the absurd, the impossible, and the revengeful thrown away, mankind would have escaped the wars, the tortures, the scaffolds, the dungeons, the agony and tears, the crimes and sorrows of a thousand years.

VI.

THE "SCHEME."

WE have also the scheme of redemption.

According to this "scheme," by the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, human nature became evil, corrupt and depraved. It became impossible for human beings to keep, in all things, the law of God. In spite of this, God allowed the people to live and multiply for some fifteen hundred years, and then on account of their wickedness drowned them all with the exception of eight persons.

The nature of these eight persons was evil, corrupt and depraved, and in the nature of things their children would be cursed with the same nature. Yet God gave them another trial, knowing exactly what the result would be. A few of these wretches he selected and made them objects of his love and care, the rest of the world he gave to indifference and neglect. To civilize the people he had chosen, he assisted them in conquering and killing their neighbors, and gave them the assistance of priests and

inspired prophets. For their preservation and punishment he wrought countless miracles, gave them many laws and a great deal of advice. He taught them to sacrifice oxen, sheep, and doves, to the end that their sins might be forgiven. The idea was inculcated that there was a certain relation between the sin and the sacrifice,—the greater the sin, the greater the sacrifice. He also taught the savagery that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sin.

In spite of all his efforts, the people grew gradually worse. They would not, they could not keep his laws.

A sacrifice had to be made for the sins of the people. The sins were too great to be washed out by the blood of animals or men. It became necessary for God himself to be sacrificed. All mankind were under the curse of the law. Either all the world must be lost or God must die.

In only one way could the guilty be justified, and that was by the death, the sacrifice of the innocent. And the innocent being sacrificed must be great enough to atone for the world. There was but one such being—God.

Thereupon God took upon himself flesh, was

born into the world—was known as Christ—was murdered, sacrificed by the Jews, and became an atonement for the sins of the human race.

This is the scheme of Redemption,—the atonement.

It is impossible to conceive of anything more utterly absurd.

A man steals, and then sacrifices a dove, or gives a lamb to a priest. His crime remains the same. He need not kill something. Let him give back the thing stolen, and in future live an honest life.

A man slanders his neighbor and then kills an ox. What has that to do with the slander. Let him take back his slander, make all the reparation that he can, and let the ox alone.

There is no sense in sacrifice, never was and never will be.

Make restitution, reparation, undo the wrong and you need shed no blood.

A good law, one springing from the nature of things, cannot demand, and cannot accept, and cannot be satisfied with the punishment, or the agony of the innocent. A god could not accept his own sufferings in justification of the guilty.—This is a complete subversion of all ideas of justice and morality. A

god could not make a law for man, then suffer in the place of the man who had violated it, and say that the law had been carried out, and the penalty duly enforced. A man has committed murder, has been tried, convicted and condemned to death. Another man goes to the governor and says that he is willing to die in place of the murderer. The governor says: "All right, I accept your offer, a murder has been committed, somebody must be hung and your death will satisfy the law."

But that is not the law. The law says, not that somebody shall be hanged, but that the murderer shall suffer death.

Even if the governor should die in the place of the criminal, it would be no better. There would be two murders instead of one, two innocent men killed, one by the first murderer and one by the State, and the real murderer free.

This, Christians call, "satisfying the law."

VII.

BELIEF.

WE are told that all who believe in this scheme of redemption and have faith in the redeemer will be rewarded with eternal joy. Some think that men can be saved by faith without works, and some think that faith and works are both essential, but all agree that without faith there is no salvation. If you repent and believe on Jesus Christ, then his goodness will be imputed to you and the penalty of the law, so far as you are concerned, will be satisfied by the sufferings of Christ.

You may repent and reform, you may make restitution, you may practice all the virtues, but without this belief in Christ, the gates of heaven will be shut against you forever.

Where is this heaven? The Christians do not know.

Does the Christian go there at death, or must he wait for the general resurrection?

They do not know.

The Testament teaches that the bodies of the dead are to be raised? Where are their souls in the meantime? They do not know.

Can the dead be raised? The atoms composing their bodies enter into new combinations, into new forms, into wheat and corn, into the flesh of animals and into the bodies of other men. Where one man dies, and some of his atoms pass into the body of another man and he dies, to whom will these atoms belong in the day of resurrection?

If Christianity were only stupid and unscientific, if its God was ignorant and kind, if it promised eternal joy to believers and if the believers practiced the forgiveness they teach, for one I should let the faith alone.

But there is another side to Christianity. It is not only stupid, but malicious. It is not only unscientific, but it is heartless. Its god is not only ignorant, but infinitely cruel. It not only promises the faithful an eternal reward, but declares that nearly all of the children of men, imprisoned in the dungeons of God will suffer eternal pain. This is the savagery of Christianity. This is why I hate its unthinkable God, its impossible Christ, its inspired lies, and its selfish, heartless heaven.

Christians believe in infinite torture, in eternal pain.

Eternal Pain!

All the meanness of which the heart of man is capable is in that one word—Hell.

That word is a den, a cave, in which crawl the slimy reptiles of revenge.

That word certifies to the savagery of primitive man.

That word is the depth, the dungeon, the abyss, from which civilized man has emerged.

That word is the disgrace, the shame, the infamy, of our revealed religion.

That word fills all the future with the shrieks of the damned.

That word brutalizes the New Testament, changes the Sermon on the Mount to hypocrisy and cant, and pollutes and hardens the very heart of Christ.

That word adds an infinite horror to death, and makes the cradle as terrible as the coffin.

That word is the assassin of joy, the mocking murderer of hope. That word extinguishes the light of life and wraps the world in gloom. That word drives reason from his throne, and gives the crown to madness.

That word drove pity from the hearts of men, stained countless swords with blood, lighted fagots, forged chains, built dungeons, erected scaffolds, and filled the world with poverty and pain.

That word is a coiled serpent in the mother's breast, that lifts its fanged head and hisses in her ear :—"Your child will be the fuel of eternal fire."

That word blots from the firmament the star of hope and leaves the heavens black.

That word makes the Christian's God an eternal torturer, an everlasting inquisitor — an infinite wild beast.

This is the Christian prophecy of the eternal future:

No hope in hell.

No pity in heaven.

No mercy in the heart of God.

VIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE Old Testament is absurd, ignorant and cruel,—the New Testament is a mingling of the false and true—it is good and bad.

The Jehovah of the Jews is an impossible monster. The Trinity absurd and idiotic, Christ is a myth or a man.

The fall of man is contradicted by every fact concerning human history that we know. The scheme of redemption—through the atonement—is immoral and senseless. Hell was imagined by revenge, and the orthodox heaven is the selfish dream of heartless serfs and slaves. The foundations of the faith have crumbled and faded away. They were miracles, mistakes, and myths, ignorant and untrue, absurd, impossible, immoral, unnatural, cruel, childish, savage. Beneath the gaze of the scientist they vanished, confronted by facts they disappeared. The

orthodox religion of our day has no foundation in truth. Beneath the superstructure can be found no fact.

Some may ask, "Are you trying to take our religion away?"

I answer No—superstition is not religion. Belief without evidence is not religion. Faith without facts is not religion.

To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits—to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty, to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world, to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words, to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm beyond the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then to be resigned—this is the religion

of reason, the creed of science. This satisfies the brain and heart.

But, says the prejudiced priest, the malicious minister, "You take away a future life."

I am not trying to destroy another world, but I am endeavoring to prevent the theologians from destroying this.

If we are immortal it is a fact in nature, and that fact does not depend on bibles, or Christs, or priests or creeds.

The hope of another life was in the heart, long before the "sacred books" were written, and will remain there long after all the "sacred books" are known to be the work of savage and superstitious men. Hope is the consolation of the world.

The wanderers hope for home.—Hope builds the house and plants the flowers and fills the air with song.

The sick and suffering hope for health.—Hope gives them health and paints the roses in their cheeks.

The lonely, the forsaken, hope for love.—Hope brings the lover to their arms. They feel the kisses on their eager lips.

The poor in tenements and huts, in spite of rags

and hunger hope for wealth.—Hope fills their thin and trembling hands with gold.

The dying hopes that death is but another birth, and Love leans above the pallid face and whispers, "We shall meet again."

Hope is the consolation of the world.

Let us hope, if there be a God that he is wise and good.

Let us hope that if there be another life it will bring peace and joy to all the children of men.

And let us hope that this poor earth on which we live, may be a perfect world—a world without a crime—without a tear.